

EAST END COOPERATIVE MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

2022 | FALL

EECM.ORG

BRIGHTENING UP OUR COMMUNITY MEAL

12-YEAR-OLD BOY CAPTIVATES LUNCH GUESTS

On any given day, the community lunch in the EECM dining room is packed. Our lunch guests know that persistent inflation and other factors make coming to get a full balanced meal at EECM a necessity. Until the summer months, the mood in the dining room was consistently quiet, reflective. Well, that all changed when a 12-year-old boy named "Aiden" came into the dining room to join them for a meal.

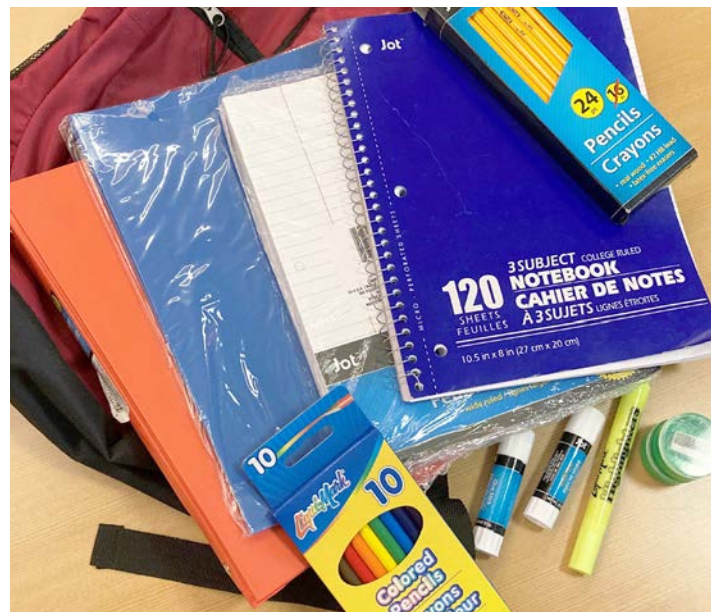
"What's with this kid? He just lights up this room," said one guest. Aiden's mother "Rose" overheard, and responded "he's my very outgoing son."

Aiden is a 6th grader whose dream is to be President of the United States. We have no doubt he can achieve that given his ability to connect with people and make them immediate friends. Aiden and Rose began coming to the EECM Food Pantry in mid-June. Rose is a single mother and currently unemployed, and needed help getting food. Our friendly volunteers told her about getting a hot, nutritious meal at the EECM Community Lunch. They went every day during the summer, and because of Aiden's big personality, they made close friends and other guests actually became competitive in wanting to sit with or near Aiden during lunch.

Rose said, "I was worried about being embarrassed needing food and a hot meal. But Aiden is a boy, and he just enjoys everything and everybody." But when it was time for Aiden to go back to school in mid-August, Community Lunch guests were sad and said they would miss him. But Aiden promised that he would come back to visit.

While we respected Rose's request to not use their last names or show photos of Aiden and her, she was proud to share their experiences here at EECM. Rose is now volunteering in the EECM kitchen until she gets settled into a new job. She says, ". . . Aiden and I learned quickly what a wonderful place EECM is where everyone is welcome. No one should ever be nervous walking into this place."

Before Aiden left, lunch guests were all smiles when EECM Volunteer Coordinator Reverend Tracy Hudson presented him with a new school backpack filled with lots of new supplies to appropriately kick off the new school year. We miss you Aiden!



Some of the school supplies Aiden received in his EECM backpack

GOOGLE SERVES AT EECM



On Tuesday, June 28, EECM hosted a group of Google employees and their families who volunteered during their annual GoogleServe month. Some were very helpful in packaging items to be distributed in the food pantry. Others worked diligently in the EECM kitchen as they assisted with food preparation.

Our staff was ever so grateful for these Google volunteers being here and helping us serve our community. If your company or corporation is interested in sending a volunteer group to EECM, please email Rev. Tracy Hudson: tracyh@eecm.org

YOUR GENEROSITY IS NEEDED

With Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season fast approaching, and given your consistent generosity, there's no doubt that you will be thinking of helping us serve those in need. And we are expecting this year to be particularly challenging due to the rise in homelessness and food costs.

Around the city, you're noticing tents popping up with homeless people living in parks, under bridges and other visible public places. With the lifting of the pandemic rental moratoriums, the numbers of homeless people are going up.

We've been collaborating recently with the leaders of the other shelters in the Pittsburgh area to discuss the dramatic increase in homelessness. We are comparing numbers and, in cooperation with city and county officials, we will be discussing publicly how we will meet these challenges.

Our food pantry distribution and community lunch attendance have seen a sharp rise in demand for food, and we point to inflation as a key factor in the increased demand.

In this newsletter, you're noticing so much of how we are gearing up to help those in need within our community. Our employee spotlight featuring Nikki Harrington warms the heart because Nikki is already working tirelessly to make sure those experiencing homelessness have a place to stay. Her department also helps with education and employment resources for the residents and the community.

In the coming months, we will be holding our annual Coat and Toy Drives along with special holiday meals. No matter what the challenge, the EECM staff rises to the occasion and EECM is always here.

Your generosity makes the difference all year round and will be especially critical as we approach the cold winter months. As always, go to eecm.org/give to continue being a part of the EECM mission of changing the lives of those facing the impacts of poverty.

MEET THE STAFF

NICOLE HARRINGTON

Nicole "Nikki" Harrington is our Director of Housing and Employment Services. Nikki manages our Emergency Shelter, Recovery House, and Education and Employment programs. And, she's become a respected voice in the region with regard to the ongoing challenges of homelessness and poverty.

Nikki came to EECM in 2018 as a housing specialist. She helped people experiencing homelessness develop housing plans and find affordable housing.

She is a doctoral candidate at Point Park University. She's pursuing an EdD in Leadership and Administration and will graduate in 2023.

Nikki sees her work here at EECM as so much more than a job and she gets her inspiration from fellow employees saying, "One of my job's best rewards is leading a team that is passionate about its work. We all have creative ideas on how we can better serve the community we work with. However, the challenge is learning



to work with different perspectives and find the best approach that will work for everyone."

With the homelessness population seemingly increasing in the Pittsburgh area, Nikki says there are no

easy answers and that each person's experience is different. "We continue to see an increase in the number of people enduring homelessness, couch surfing, sleeping on streets under bridges, and in tents and cars. We realize these people are more likely to be disconnected from housing."

At EECM, Nikki ensures that each client who is experiencing homelessness is treated with dignity as an individual. "We continue to do outreach and provide continuous support. The resources within our organization allows our clients to continue to thrive independently."



THE GREAT GARDEN

EECM VOLUNTEERS GROW AND HARVEST FRESH PRODUCE

Here at East End Cooperative Ministry, we accurately say that our many volunteers are the backbone of our success in serving the food-insecure. And it takes a strong back and lots of commitment to plant and maintain 17 garden beds outside of our building. The late summer harvest has included fresh and delicious vegetables like cherry tomatoes, plum tomatoes, beefsteak tomatoes, eggplant, lettuce, broccoli, zucchini, kale, and many kinds of fresh herbs including sage, dill, and thyme.

The garden produce is distributed to our food pantry clients. EECM Food Pantry Manager Krista Brolley says, "food pantry clients know when we have freshly picked produce from the garden and they truly appreciate getting it. It's just so fresh."

GIVE BIG PITTSBURGH



GIVE BIG PITTSBURGH - GIVING TUESDAY CAMPAIGN IS NOVEMBER 29, 2022!

Mark your calendars for "Give Big," the Pittsburgh community's day of giving – an opportunity to unite our community around causes in which we truly believe and help nonprofit organizations connect to the larger community.

**GIVEGAB.COM/NONPROFITS/
EAST-END-COOPERATIVE-MINISTRY**

THANK YOU!

EECM raised \$25,833 on #ONEDAY! A huge Thank You to all of our donors that participated in this year's Critical Needs Alert, sponsored by The Pittsburgh Foundation, who matched a percentage of all donor contributions. EECM ranked 9th out of 193 nonprofits that participated in #ONEDAY. Only nonprofits that provide direct services in child care, food and nutrition, housing, physical & mental health, or transportation in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties were invited to participate.

HOLIDAY GIFT DRIVES

THANKSGIVING GIFT CARD DRIVE

EECM's Thanksgiving gift card drive is back! If you are interested in donating a grocery store gift card of \$20 for families to purchase a Thanksgiving dinner, please mail or deliver to EECM by November 7, 2022. Please note "Thanksgiving" on the correspondence. If you have questions, contact Rev. Tracy Hudson: tracyh@eecm.org

HOLIDAY GIFT DRIVE FOR CHILDREN

Make the holiday special for a child in need and sponsor a child(ren) this holiday season! Participants can provide the gifts, or give a monetary donation and EECM will purchase the gift. If you are interested, please fill out the participation form that can be found at eecm.org/drives and return via mail, or email to tracyh@eecm.org by October 28, 2022. If you want to purchase a gift, Rev. Tracy Hudson will contact you with a specific child's wish list this holiday season.

SHARE THE WARMTH!

EECM is collecting new and gently used winter coats for the 2022 **Share the Warmth** winter coat drive. Donated coats will be distributed to community members in need. New coats with tags, and gently used coats, may be dropped off at EECM through October 14. We are also partnering with Strong II Dry Cleaners who will provide free dry cleaning for used coats donated at their locations (and will give discounts for participants' personal dry cleaning) Strong II will accept coat donation through October 14. Visit eecm.org/drives for more information.



SUMMER CAMP 2022

THIS YEAR'S CAMP A HUGE SUCCESS THANKS TO CAMPER'S AND STAFF

It was an exciting, fun, and rewarding experience for 178 youngsters at our annual EECM Summer Camp. Kids ages 5 through 16 enjoyed three meals a day while engaging in numerous dance, drama, music, arts and culture classes, all leading up to the final production at Westinghouse High School on the evening of August 4th.

But it wasn't all time spent preparing for the final production. Daily field trips included fun visits to Kennywood, Idlewild Park, Sandcastle, the Carnegie Science Center, The Pittsburgh Zoo, and more. There was even a day spent learning how to bowl and competing in team bowling! The kids loved it.

For the most part, though, campers worked on their stage skills because they knew they'd shine at this year's production called "The Big Come Back" at Westinghouse auditorium. Every child takes part. More than 300 parents, grandparents, siblings and

friends came to see the performance, which was filled with chorus and solo numbers, as well as toe-tapping group dances. It was a huge success and the kids got a standing ovation during their curtain call.

EECM'S Summer Camp is a signature program of our Children and Youth department. CEO Carole Bailey thanked the EECM staff and the campers and their families for making this year's camp a huge success.

Our Summer Camp is funded by The Grable Foundation, The Akers-Gerber Foundation, Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation, FISA Foundation, Kennywood Charitable Trust, Pitcairn-Crabb, Buncher Foundation, and the Roy A. Hunt Foundation. EECM also thanks St. Jude Parish in Shadyside and the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education for providing locations and support.

For information about next year's camp and all of our Children and Youth programs, go to eecm.org.





EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT BETH TAYLOR



She's a big star in the EECM kitchen and she has a famous name to go with it. Elizabeth Taylor goes by "Beth" to keep it simple. But her volunteer dedication is anything but simple.

Beth is a super busy freelance writer for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Local Pittsburgh*, and other publications. But she finds time to come to our kitchen twice a week "because I just love being here and I love the people and I love the mission." Beth helps cook and prepare food for our weekday Community Lunch. Because of the hard work of volunteers and staff, guests enjoy a delicious hot meal in our dining room.

Beth Taylor loves seeing the community's satisfaction with what's created and served in the kitchen, and she gets so much out of volunteering. "I learn so much about cooking and food service."

EECM Volunteer Coordinator Reverend Tracy Hudson praises the work of Taylor and all of the EECM volunteers who help fulfill our mission every day. If you're interested in volunteering, email Reverend Tracy at tracyh@eecm.org